

A banner for the American Artist Online Store. It features a dark brown background with a collage of colorful autumn leaves on the right side. The text "Visit the American Artist Online Store..." is written in a white, sans-serif font, with "American Artist" in a larger, bold font.

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MeetingWorld Panel: Read, talk to people, observe

JULY 14, 2004 -- As discussed in yesterday's general session at MeetingWorld, MeetingNews' annual education conference and trade show for meeting professionals, it's essential for planners to take these actions to enable them to spot societal trends, and understand how they affect meetings.

The panel was moderated by Lalia Rach, associate dean at New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management. The panelists included planner Joan Eisenstodt of Washington-based Eisenstodt Associates, and Toronto-based Jim Carroll, author, speaker and futurist.

At issue at the Grand Hyatt New York Hotel was a number of social topics pertinent to meetings, including demographic, generational, multicultural and gender concerns. Topics ranged from scheduled nap times, to special rooms dedicated to breast feedings or religious observations.

Key issues included the following:

-- People are staying in the work place longer, leading to employees from many different generations working side by side. The panelists discussed the impact of this on meetings content and delivery, the creation of materials to appeal to these divergent groups, and how to make sure the oldest don't feel irrelevant and the youngest don't get marginalized.

-- As the population ages, the panel noted, planners must determine whether meeting facilities are designing and equipping their properties to accommodate older guests' needs, and the resultant impact on site selection. Eisenstodt noted that facilities may add better lighting, easy-to-maneuver doorknobs, and handlebars in bathtubs to accommodate older guests.

-- The panelists posited that people want flexibility in their jobs. They projected that in a few years nearly 50 percent of the workforce will work from home, and that many will leave positions within five years, and will hold three to four careers and nearly 20 jobs during their lifetimes. The discussion turned on how this affects meeting audiences, and planners' ability to reach them.

-- By 2015, the panelists projected, Hispanics will make up 50 percent of the U.S. population. Even though most of them may be fluent in English by then, Carroll noted that a recent study indicated Hispanics are more comfortable conducting business and having contracts written in Spanish. At issue in the session: Are planners ready for simultaneous translations and bilingual marketing and legal materials?

For complete coverage of MeetingWorld 2004, see the August issue of MeetingNews.



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